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New funding will help to "move" towards homelessness solutions in Surrey

SURREY, BRITISH COLUMBIA, March 9, 2007 — Nina Grewal, Member of Parliament for Fleetwood-Port Kells, on behalf of the Honourable Monte Solberg, Minister of Human Resources and Social Development, today announced $30,000 in funding to assist the organization OPTIONS: Services to Communities Society's Hyland House Outreach Program. The funding will be put toward the purchase of an extended wheel base minivan.

At the announcement, MP Grewal was joined by Dave S. Hayer, Member of the Legislative Assembly for Surrey-Tynehead, on behalf of the Minister responsible for Housing, Rich Coleman, and representatives from the organization OPTIONS: Services to Communities Society.

"This project is a concrete example of how Canada's New Government is taking action to prevent and reduce homelessness in our communities, said Ms. Grewal. "By reaching out to homeless individuals in our communities through projects like Hyland House, we are improving the health and general well-being of people who are unable to access appropriate shelter."

"Outreach workers help people who are homeless get the services they need," said MLA Hayer. "The program is designed to help people break out of the cycle of homelessness by moving people from temporary, emergency shelter into more permanent, supportive housing."

The Hyland House Outreach Program received Government of Canada funding of $30,000 through the National Homelessness Initiative, for the purchase of an extended wheel base minivan. This vehicle is used to support outreach services to individuals who are homeless in the City of Surrey, including the provision of food and clothing and referrals to housing and emergency shelters. The Province of British Columbia also provided $163,000 over three years to cover operating costs for the outreach program.

"Outreach services are a key priority in the Regional Homelessness Plan for Greater Vancouver and we applaud the federal and provincial governments for recognizing the essential role outreach workers play in connecting people who are homeless to the services and housing they need," said Val MacDonald, spokesperson for the Greater Vancouver Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness. "The Steering Committee is proud to support these investments that will enhance the outreach services provided through Hyland House."

"Surrey does not have a compressed downtown core. Our homeless are spread out through six town centres," said Christine Mohr, Executive Director of OPTIONS: Services for Communities. "This van and the outreach worker funded through BC Housing will allow us to deliver many needed supplies and resources to homeless people in all of the centres. In time we hope our outreach program will evolve and we can really begin to make a difference. Surrey is unique and we need made-in-Surrey solutions."

Canada's New Government recently announced that the NHI, scheduled to end in March 2007, will be replaced by an improved strategy, the Homelessness Partnering Strategy on April 1, 2007.

The new Homelessness Partnering Strategy will provide $269.6 million over two years to help

communities across Canada combat homelessness more effectively. The strategy focuses on a housing-first approach to homelessness, recognizing that housing stability is essential to self-sufficiency and full participation in Canadian society. With its clear goals of improved partnerships, enhanced sustainability and tangible results, the new Strategy will provide concrete, meaningful and lasting results for Canadians in need.

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